(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the Government have initiated any steps to check the piracy of our traditional knowledge and biological resources; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI BABULAL MARANDI) : (a) and (b) The Government encourages public participation in conservation and sustainable use of biological resources. For example, the ecodevelopment programmes around national parks, sanctuaries and other reserve forest areas provide for the participation of local communities in the conservation of these areas and protection of wildlife. The Joint Forest Management approach for regeneration of degraded forest lands is based on the participation of the local communities.

(c) and (d) After having broad based consultations with Ministries/Departments, academic and technical institutions, experts, NGOs and other stakeholders on protecting biological resources and indigenous knowledge associated with them and securing equitable benefits arising out of the use of these resources, the Government had constituted an expert Committee to suggest a draft legislation on Biological Diversity.

The Committee gave a draft outline of an Act on Biological Diversity in October, 1997. The Government is now further considering the proposal to enact a law on Biological Diversity. The proposal *inter alia* includes the issue of regulating access to biological resources and indigenous knowledge associated with them with the purpose of ensuring equitable sharing of benefits arising out of the use of such resources.

Anta Gas Thermal Power Project, Stage-II

709. SHRI GIRDHARI LAL BHARGAVA : Will the Minister of POWER be pleased to state :

(a) whether NTPC has earlier planned gas power station of 413 MW capacity at Anta and no head way on it was made as the Union Government has not provided gas linkage for Anta Gas Thermal Power Project, Stage-II;

(b) if so, whether the Government of India allocated gas to power stations in Delhi and Gujarat after the Anta Stage-II was conceived;

(c) if so, the considerations on which it was done;

(d) the likely time by which the Anta Stage-II gas based thermal station of NTPC is likely to get gas allocation and the Union Government sanction;

(e) whether the gas allocation for the existing Anta GTPS is adequate to operate it as base load station as per policy of the Government;

(f) if so, the details thereof; and

(g) if not, the time by which the additional allocation of gas is likely to be made for stage-I and also for Stage-II;

THE MINISTER OF POWER (SHRI P.R. KUMARAMANGALAM) : (a) National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC) had originally formulated a proposal for expansion of Anta Gas Power Project Stage-II (430 MW) in 1988 considering gas as the main fuel to be supplied from HBJ pipeline. However, because of non-availability of gas, the proposal could not be processed further, the expansion project was reformulated in 1997 with a capacity of 650 MW with naphtha as a primary fuel.

(b) and (c) The allocation of gas to the Power stations in Delhi, Gujarat and Anta were made at the same time.

(d) to (g) Lineage of naphtha at 80% PLF for Anta expansion project has been provided in November, 1997. Anta gas power plant stage-I is supplied gas from HBJ pipeline. The capacity of HBJ Pipeline is 33.40 MCMD has already been made. Since the allocation has already succeeded the projected availability of gas by ONGC, additional allocation of gas to Anta gas power project is not possible at this stage. The expansion proposal is presently under appraisal by Central Electricity Authority (CEA) for techno-economic clearance.

Vacancies in High Courts and Supreme Court

710. SHRI SATYA PAL JAIN
PROF. P.J. KURIEN :
SHRI BHAGWAN SHANKAR RAWAT :
SHRI SUSHIL KUMAR SHINDE :
SHRIMATI JAYANTI PATNAIK :

Will the Minister of LAW, JUSTICE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) the total number of sanctioned strength of the permanent and additional judges of various High Courts and Supreme Court of India;

(b) the total number of posts of Judges lying vacant in various High Courts as well as in the Supreme Court of India and the percentage that such vacancies constitute with respect to the total number of sanctioned posts of judges as on April 30, 1998;

(c) the time from which these posts are lying vacant; and

(d) the steps taken to fill up the posts and the time by which these are likely to be filled?

THE MINISTER OF LAW, JUSTICE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS AND MINISTER OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (DR. M. THAMBI DURAI) : (a) to (d) As 1.5.1998, against the sanctioned strength of 26 Judges, 21 Judges were in position in the Supreme Court of India, leaving 5